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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: ANECDOTES FROM A TFG INSIDER

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C/NF) Summary. Former Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) Ambassador to Ethiopia Abdul Karin Farah told PolOff on February 26 that TFG President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed intended to reinstate Farah as the TFG's ambassador to Ethiopia as soon as possible. (Note: Farah was the TFG Ambassador to Ethiopia for several years before being replaced by a relative of former President Yusuf in 2007. End Note.) Farah, who was in Djibouti with Sharif during the election for president, said Sharif's enemies were painting Sharif as a U.S. puppet, and that the perception was undermining Sharif's ability to gain support in Somalia. He said Sharif had made a critical mistake when he returned to Mogadishu after being elected president by facilitating an assembly of Somali clerics who consequently issued a declaration calling for the withdrawal of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and the establishment of Islamic law. Farah claimed Sharif was boxed in by Islamic hard-liners, and that if the international community did not come to Sharif's aid, Sharif would have no choice but to accommodate the hard-liners including possibly, Hassan Dahir Aweys, Muktar Robow, and Hassan al-Turki who, Farah said, were hoping eventually to takeover the TFG in order to appear "legitimate" in the eyes of the international community. Farah alleged that now Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden was the "kingmaker" and was manipulating Sharif for Hassan's own purposes. Farah noted that Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles told Sharif in a meeting on the margins of the early February AU Summit that Ethiopia would not move against Sharif as long as Sharif did not support anti-Ethiopian activities. Farah stated that Iranian President Ahmadinejad, in a February 24 meeting in Djibouti with TFG Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, invited Sharif to Tehran, in secret if necessary, for consultations. End Summary.

Sharif Being Painted as a US Puppet

12. (C/NF) Farah said that Sharif's enemies were spreading the notion that Sharif was a puppet of the United States as a way to undermine his credibility within Somalia. As a result it had become the general belief in Somalia that Washington hand-picked Sharif. Farah insisted that this belief was undermining Sharif's ability to build support. At the same time, many Somalis were unsure of where PM Sharmarke stood with the United States because it was the general view that Sharmarke was rejected by Washington when former President Yusuf tried to appoint Sharmarke to be the TFG Ambassador to the United States.

¶3. (C/NF) In reality, Farah said, Sharif did not know where he stood with Washington. He said that US officials had given considerable advice to Sharif on what he should and should not do, but Sharif did not understand whether he truly had Washington's support. Farah said Sharmarke was in the same position, and was unsure of where to go with the United States.

Sharif's First Mistake as President?

¶4. (C/NF) Farah asserted that Sharif's first mistake as President occurred when he returned to Mogadishu and called a meeting of Somali clerics together with the hope that the assembly would come out in support of Sharif's government, but instead the group issued a declaration in mid-February with elements that will be difficult for Sharif to implement. The declaration covered a spectrum of issues, but included a call that AMISOM withdraw from Somalia within 120 days, that the country be governed by Islamic law, and that the "anti-Islamic laws" within the TFG charter be changed.

Sharif Boxed in by Hard-liners?

¶5. (C/NF) Farah claimed that the "hard-liners" were "sitting on Sharif's shoulder," and that if the international community did not come quickly to assist the TFG Sharif would have no choice but to succumb to the hard-liner's demands. Farah expected a number of prominent opposition leaders to come into the TFG in some form, including Muktar Robow,

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Hassan Dahir Aweys, and Hassan al-Turki. Farah believed that it was the plan of the opposition members to seek accommodation with the TFG in order to get out from under the "terrorist" stigma, eventually take-over the TFG and then stand in front of the international community as part of the "legitimate" government of Somalia.

Sharif Hassan the Kingmaker?

¶6. (C/NF) Farah referred to Sharif Hassan as the "kingmaker," and alleged that Hassan was manipulating Sharif, who Farah considered to be "naive" and "inexperienced," for Hassan's own purposes. Farah said that Sharif and Hassan had already decided that Hassan would be deputy prime minister, and therefore, Hassan did not want the prime minister to be powerful enough to either exclude Hassan from decisionmaking or access to Sharif. For example, Hassan was behind the pick of Sharmarke as Prime Minister. Farah said that Sharif had originally planned to name Dr. Abdirizak Osman Hassan "Jurile," a Somali politician since the Siad Barre days, as prime minister until Hassan made the case that Jurile would be too hard to control and would run circles around Sharif. Instead, Hassan picked Sharmarke who Hassan thought would be easier to control, and who had the added benefit of being acceptable to the international community. Farah said Hassan was now putting Hassan's own people, including relatives, around Sharmarke to keep him contained, and to monitor Sharmarke's activities.

¶7. (C/NF) According to Farah, Hassan was also heavily involved in the selection of the cabinet. In Sharif's first meeting with Sharmarke in Djibouti, Farah said Sharif told Sharmarke that he did not want problems between the president and prime minister as had been the case with former President Yusuf and former Prime Ministers Gedi and Nur Adde. Sharif also told Sharmarke that Sharif did not want to be involved in the selection of the cabinet because he did not want Sharmarke to complain that people he did not trust had been forced on him by Sharif. Sharmarke protested noting that because he had never spent much time in Somalia, and did not know the political landscape, particularly among the ARS, that he would need help in the selection process. As a

result, Sharif brought Hassan in to assist Sharmarke in picking the members, but eventually Sharif himself became directly involved in the process.

Regarding Sharif's Cabinet

18. (C/NF) Sharif, who is a Hawiye/Abgal, did not name a single Abgal to his cabinet, according to Farah, who said that the Abgal clan was now increasingly unhappy, and asking Sharif "are we nothing?" Instead Sharif gave the Hawiye/Habir Gedir four positions to try to appease them. Negotiations were ongoing to find a way to address the Abgal concerns and to give them additional positions. Farah also said that the Darood/Marehan were also angry with the their representation in the cabinet, and that two Marehan appointees refused to take their positions in protest.

19. (C/NF) Farah said Sharif appointed Abdulkadir Ali Omar, a former Union of Islamic Courts leader, as Minister of the Interior because he had one of the largest and most powerful militias in Mogadishu upon which Sharif relied for protection. Farah said Sharif did not trust Abdulkadir, but really had no choice. Sharif hoped eventually to separate Abdulkadir from his militia as the government became more formalized. Farah also said that there was an internal battle going on between Abdulkadir and the Minister of Security Omar Hashi Aden over who would control the police. Sharif did not want Abdulkadir to control the police because it would put too much power in Abdulkadir's hands. Farah expect this issue to take some weeks to be resolved.

Ethiopia's Message to Sheikh Sharif

10. (C/NF) Farah said he attended the meeting between Sheikh Sharif and Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles during the February 1-3 AU Summit, Sharif's first meeting with the Ethiopian government since being elected president. According to Farah, Meles told Sharif that Ethiopia would

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support him, and would not "send a single soldier or ship a single bullet across the border intended for you (Sharif) as long as you maintain the security of Somalia within Somalia," and did not support anti-Ethiopian activities. Farah said Sharif agreed to this and that the meeting had gone well. Privately, however, Farah said the Ethiopians were not happy because they anticipate that Sharif will not be able to live up to his promise, and that sooner or later, Sharif would have no choice but to accommodate Ethiopia's enemies.

More Resistance to Sheikh Sharif

11. (C/NF) Farah noted that Mohammed Said Hersi Morgan, aka "General Morgan" a son-in-law of former President Siad Barre, and Meslah Mohammed Siad Barre, son of Siad Barre, were currently in Addis Ababa conspiring to form a coalition against Sheikh Sharif and the TFG. However, he said they would be leaving soon at Prime Minister Meles' request because, although Meles did not care about their anti-Sharif activities, he did not want them conducting those activities within Ethiopia.

Sharmarke's Conversation with Iranian President Ahmadinejad

12. (C/NF) Farah said that Ahmadinejad, in a February 24 meeting in Djibouti with PM Sharmarke, invited Sharif to Tehran for consultations. Ahmadinejad offered to send a plane to fly Sharif to Iran in secret if that was Sharif's wish. Farah said Sharmarke agreed to relay the invitation to Sharif, but privately Sharmarke intended to warn Sharif that going to Tehran was a bad idea. PolOff reinforced that a visit to Tehran by Sharif, secret or not, would not be viewed

well by Washington.

Comment

¶13. (C/NF) Farah's readout of the Meles-Sharif meeting is consistent with other reports of the meeting, and we believe it accurately reflects Ethiopia's position that as long as Sharif does not support anti-Ethiopian activities, Meles will tolerate Sharif. Our recent conversations with senior Ethiopian officials also suggest that the Ethiopians are not optimistic that Sharif will be able to deliver on his promises. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tekeda told EmbOffs on February 19 that he feared Sharif would eventually have no choice but to "go over to those on the other side of the barricade." Post will make it clear to interlocutors we meet in Addis Ababa that Washington does not want to see a Union of Islamic Courts II under the banner of the TFG. End Comment.
YAMAMOTO